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## Preface

An “International Conference on Mathematics and its Applications” was held at City University of Hong Kong from May 28–31, 2004, in honour of Professor Roderick’s Wong 60th birthday. This event, which attracted more than 130 participants from all over the world, was hailed as a big success. This volume gathers some of the papers that were delivered on this occasion, each of them devoted to the latest trends in pure and applied mathematics.

A remarkable feature of Roderick’s life is its international character: Born in Shanghai, he did his undergraduate studies in San Diego, California, and his graduate studies at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, where he got his Ph.D. Then he moved on to the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, where he spent 25 years, before joining City University of Hong Kong 11 years ago.

During his exceptional career, Roderick has made deep and lasting contributions to several areas of analysis and applied mathematics, in particular in the following areas:

- Asymptotic expansions of integrals with a large or small parameter, particularly in cases where classical methods fail;
- Asymptotic theory of linear difference equations;
- Turning-point theory for linear difference equations;
- Construction of uniform asymptotic approximations and expansions for classical and nonclassical orthogonal polynomials, as well as for other higher transcendental functions.

Roderick is also well known as the author of an extraordinarily valuable book on asymptotic analysis, entitled “Asymptotic Approximation of Integrals”, which every applied analyst or theoretical physicist should have on his or her bookshelf! A sure sign of its enduring quality is that it was reprinted by SIAM 12 years after its appearance!

Special mention should also be made of all the tremendous help and guidance with which Roderick, as a thesis advisor or as a colleague, has generously inspired promising scores of young Canadian, American, and Chinese mathematicians, as well as older Chinese mathematicians who experienced difficulties in their careers for various reasons. Of Roderick’s 90 or so research papers, well over half have been authored in this way. In other words, not only is he a leading international researcher, but also he is a truly dedicated professor.

He also took many responsibilities in the public affairs of universities. At the University of Manitoba, he was Head of the Department of Applied Mathematics, then also Director of the Institute for Industrial Mathematical Sciences. Upon his arrival at City University in 1994, he was named Head of the Department of Mathematics, which he immediately set out to completely rejuvenate. And indeed, he did not lose time:

Within one year, he had already accomplished two far-sighted actions: One was the recruitment of Steve Smale, the other was the creation of the Liu Bie Ju Centre for Mathematical Sciences, which he has been heading since then. Both actions have tremendously contributed to the fame of City University in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

In 1998, he became Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering. By common recognition, his manifold actions in this capacity, which he held until last year, have been truly remarkable and highly beneficial to the university. One of them, and not the least, was his far-sighted policy of international recruitments, which he pursued with indefatigable energy. Since 2004, Roderick is Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, another testimony to his endless dedication to the common good.

On a more personal basis, Roderick is a man of very high standards, who works very hard, always sticks to his commitments, consistently strives for excellence, and strongly believes in the cross-fertilization of different backgrounds.

In recognition of his mathematical talents and accomplishments, Roderick Wong justly received many honours: He has been named Honorary Professor by four different universities, he received the Killam Research Fellowship, one of the most prestigious awards for research from the Canada Council, the Rh Award for Outstanding Contributions to Scholarship and Research from the University of Manitoba, he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and he was elected a Foreign Member of the Academy of Sciences of Torino.

On behalf of all the participants to the Conference and as a testimony of our sincere friendship and lasting admiration, we are happy to dedicate this volume to a colleague and friend of exceptional merits and talents: Roderick Wong.

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